FFR
209

THE SPRING WOUND MAMMOTH
100
YEARS
OLD
PANCAKE COALITION

ISSUE № 209: DRAGON BEARD NOODLES TAKE OVER YOUR CHIROPRACTOR'S WAITING ROOM

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in

his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."
--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

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If this magazine does not meet your expectations, please return it to us in its original condition for a full refund, minus the cost of enlightenment.

Submissions

Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded) To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

1. **Craft** (or **Culinary Construct**): 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
2. **Our physical address: 250.5 ⅛ ∞^{11} State Street, Bangor, Maine, 04401.**

3. **The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In posession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, “China Wok Habitue,” suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though

it's more likely a testament to the local takeout joint's generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)

4. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
5. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring

artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.

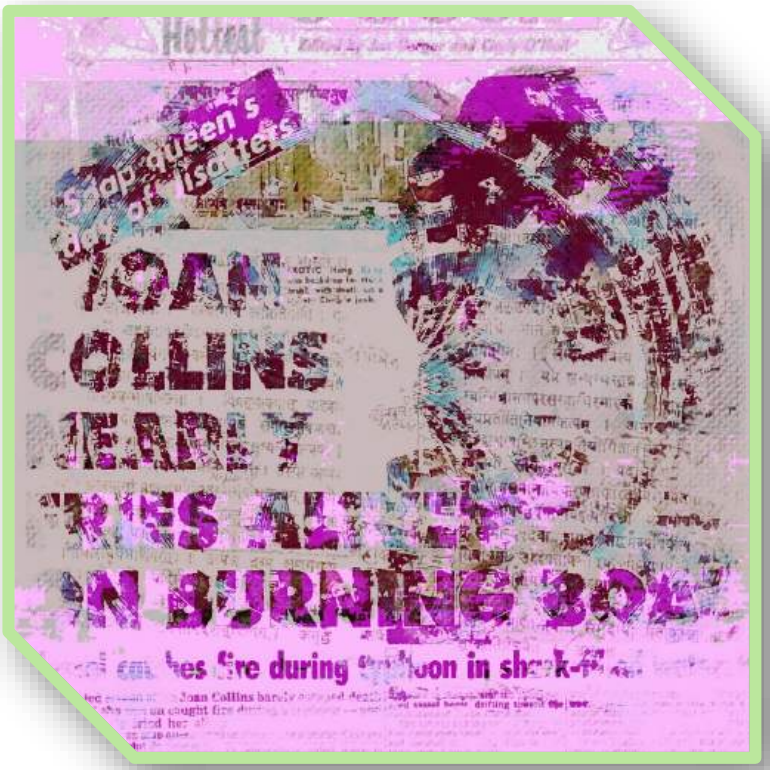
6. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
7. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

Our website

Non ignora mali, miseris
succurrere disco."

— Virgil, The Aeneid


Hollywood
JOAN
COLLINS
DEADLY
'N BURNING BOAT

Kārikā-Vig-Samāsa: The Compendium of Farcical Distinctions

By Harpreet Gargi Singh

(I) The Sūtra on Existential Woe

Kārikā I.i.\text{जिज्ञासामानसि मनसि। परमाणौवृक्षस्य दर्शनम्॥}
Jijñāsamānasi manasi. Paramāṇau-vṛkṣasya darśanam.

(Translation): The Inquirer's Mind, when properly inquiring, perceives the Tree of Woe in the Atom of Existence.

Webbed Toed Frank's \text{BHAṢYA} (Commentary) on Kārikā I.i

Verily, the *\text{Jijñāsu} (inquirer)* is I, sprawled across a Barcalounger of dubious provenance, attempting to ferret out some scrap of meaning from the latest issue of World's Hottest Gossip. The Mind (manasi), which the previous Sūtra, now lost in a 1936 scrap-metal drive, characterized as a "Cross between a defective meat-slicer and a tax audit," is inevitably drawn to the **Atom of Existence** (paramāṇau).

What is this atom? It is the 100\text{ cents} one is compelled to spend on a second, unnecessary \text{wig} when the first is already a frightful \text{guignol} of synthetic hair. It is the existential pointlessness of the entire transaction. And the **Tree of Woe** (vṛkṣasya darśanam)? Ah, that is the sight of \text{Joan Collins}, not merely aflame (a common enough occurrence in Hollywood), but \text{"nearly fried alive"} upon a \text{"creaky Chinese junk."} This is the \text{ultimate} in **Dukkha**—suffering—as defined by a world where tragedy must be not only hyperbolic but also 100% preventable. This spectacle of synthetic coiffure and maritime disaster overwhelms the 100 billion synapses of the cerebrum, proving that all reality is merely a pretext for an over-punctuated headline.

This \text{Vṛtti} (mental modification) is further compounded by the Aparipūrṇa-sāṃskāra-vāda—the doctrine of incomplete spiritual accumulation. The inquirer, having failed to achieve true \text{Mokṣa} (release) through yoga or even a respectable \text{T.S. Eliot} readership, is stuck contemplating the N\text{irguṇa} reality of "Over-Stock Designer Wigs Without The Label."

नियम (Niyama - The Rule): The general rule is that those who buy the cheapest wigs are inevitably those whose existential trauma is most likely to be published next to a coupon for a \text{loan}.

(II) The Sūtra on Categorical Exclusion (Vyāvṛtti)

Kārikā I.ii.
\text{अनन्यत्रनिधिरूक्षणम्॥ अनन्यत्रनिधिरूपणम्॥}
Ananyatra-nidhirūkṣaṇam. Ananyatra-nidhi-rūpaṇam.

(Translation): The definition of that which is dependent upon nothing else (Nidhi) shall now be examined.

Perelman's \text{VṚTTI} (Gloss) on Kārikā I.ii

The great challenge of ontology is separating the necessary from the \text{nauseous}. \text{Anuvṛtti} (inclusion) is the depressing realization that \text{every} woman in the advertisement possesses a hairdo that looks like a freshly waxed hubcap. **Vyāvṛtti** (exclusion) is the heroic, albeit doomed, philosophical effort to differentiate one \text{Dravya} (substance) from another.

We must exclude the neighbor (Pāriśeṣaprakaraṇa), who is the ultimate \text{an-ātman} (not-self). This \text{Dharma} (characteristic) of the neighbor is to be perpetually pained by the sight of something nice. The Rellers (Walter and Frances), with their fatuous \text{"God bless this house"} sign, believed they were enacting a simple, saccharine piety. But their neighbor, possessing the \text{Vibhāga} (disjunction) of the true \text{Zhlub}, correctly saw it as a violation of the 18\text{th} Amendment and a grievous assault upon the \text{Viśeṣa} (particularity) of their privet hedge.

This is the great \text{Pramāṇa} (means of valid knowledge): the only thing that cannot be reduced to a wig coupon or a celebrity's fiery mishap is the sheer, unadulterated, **neighborly spite** (Asāṃskṛtika-pratiyogi-bhāva). This spite is the **\text{Nidhi}** (treasure) that is dependent on nothing else. It is the only \text{Absolute}.

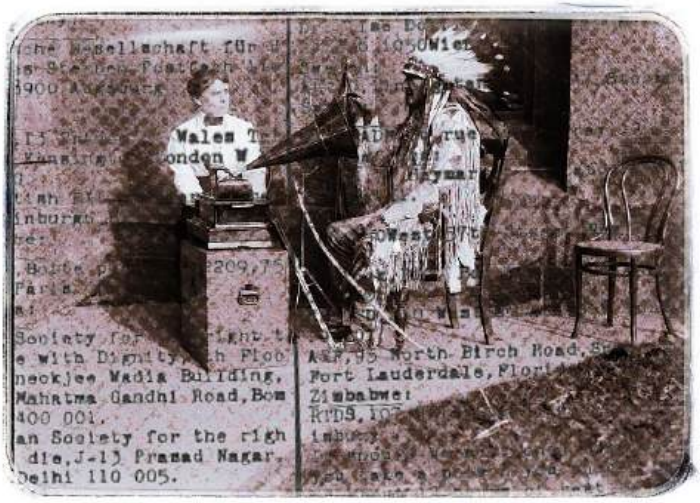
The mind boggles, I tell you. It simply boggles.

Handwritten Marginalia (HĀŚYAM)

(Transcription): Anyābhāva pratiprasiddheḥ.

(Annotation): The counter-establishment of the absence of the other (meaning the sign must come down, because the neighbor's misery is a form of Mokṣa).

Bottom of Page: \text{Anuvṛtti} (The following-along, or the fact that \text{all} articles on \text{Joan Collins} eventually mention sharks)
Top Right: \text{Mahākāla} (Great Time, or the time it takes for 1\text{st} wig to be shipped)



Title: Turquoise Trail Turkeys: A Gloomunder of the Spirit (or How the Mailroom Man Became a Clong of His Own Making)

By 999 Is Your Password Reset Code

Chapter 1: The Knee, the Kiva, and the Kabbalah

The mailroom at NJIT was a cathedral of beige. For twenty years, Thunderbird—a name inherited from his grandfather, a trader of obsidian and stories—had sorted packages with the precision of a shaman counting eagle feathers. But now, his knee, that sacred hinge between earth and ambition, had betrayed him. A misstep, a twist, a gloom-clong of cartilage meeting fate, and he was thrust into a leave of absence, a liminal space where the mundane dissolved into the soundsense of thundergloom.

Thunderbird's apartment became a babelized nest: Navajo rugs tangled with Skate Board Enterprises flyers, a Cabbage Rec. LP spinning in the corner, and a typewriter humming like a kapitan of chaos. He scribbled: "The script called for me to be alive for the next scene."
Enter the Cooligans: Coyote (a gender-fluid crypto-analyst fluent in Lakota and BASIC), Buffalo Bill (a former Wall Street quant turned bead trader), and Sundance (a poet whose verses were eggcorns of Black Flag lyrics and Seneca incantations). They convened in a Brooklyn warehouse, its walls plastered with Euthanasia Society manifestos and Subterranean Records catalogs.

"We're not starting a zine," Sundance declared, licking a stamp into a soundsense of soul-slime. "We're excavating the turquoiseunder."

Chapter 2: The Turquoise Trail Turkeys Take Flight [Or: How to Bake a Cake in the Absence of Eggs]

Their first issue was a portmanteau of the sacred and the profane. Thunderbird's knee injury became a mythos: "The detector entered the room and saw the victim. He'd been dead for days. The sprechen of corporate wellness had failed."

Inside, pages bled:

- Review: "Die Zwei's 'Crassever'—A funk-style ghostdanceroom for the undead."
- Letter: A handwritten plea from Roberta Mulas (Italy): "Without the zine, I cannot survive. Please, make me a soundsense of punkpopocalypse."
- Ad: "Trade tapes of Negative Trend for a soundsense of gloomunder. Reply in Czech Máj."

The Turkeys' manifesto: "Punk's not dead—it's been babelized into a

multilingual mashup of turquoise and turpitude."

Chapter 3: The Invention of Nothing [Or: Trapped by Television Revisited]

Thunderbird's knee healed, but his mind unraveled. He began dreaming of a 1936 inventor whose "monitor and camera" was a zine, a "new form of television" that broadcast not light, but "the clong of unquiet spirits." In his dreams, the rival scientist was Coyote, the bill collector was Sundance, and the organized crime figures were Buffalo Bill's algorithms.

The Turkeys staged a performance-art demonstration at a stadium: a "football game" where players wore soundsense-printed jerseys ("gloomthunder", "punkpopocalypse") and the ball was a Cabbage Rec. LP. The crowd chanted, "The Kapitan gives a sprechen to the matelot!"

Chapter 4: The Meta-Humor of Existence (Or: How to Write a Zine When the Zine Writes You)

The Turquoise Trail Turkeys' fourth issue was a Würfelspiel Grid of despair:

- Review: "Descendents' Milo Goes To College—The best punkrecord since Fitter Stoke Has A Bath."
- Letter: Thunderbird confessed: "I am writing this while my knee mondegreens into the soundsense of thundergloom."
- Ad: "Trade your Flipper EP for a soundsense of turquoisegloom. Reply in Navajo piglatin."

Coyote broke the fourth wall: "This zine is a meta-humor coffin. We are the soundsense of our own gloomunder."

Epilogue: The Babelized Future [Or: The Clong of a Thousand Turkeys]

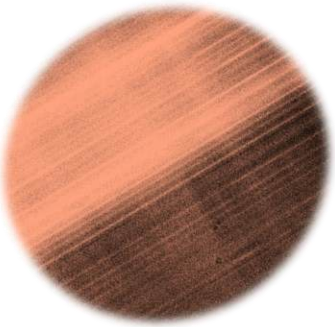
The Turquoise Trail Turkeys became a soundsense of their own myth. Thunderbird's knee, now a portmanteau of "sacred injury", guided him to the Turquoise Trail's actual path in New Mexico. There, he found a "dead Kennedys" mural painted on a canyon wall, and realized:

"The zine was never about the page. It was the clong of the gloomunder—a babelized prayer that the old ways could meta-humor their way into the new."

He mailed a final issue to Roberta Mulas, titled "The Gloomunder of Punkpopocalypse". It contained only a single word, written in Czech Máj:

"Začátek."

(Translation: "Begin.")



GLANDLARD'S PLEATED EPILOGUE: THE AQUEOUS TENURE AND THE SUN RA DEPARTURE

BY ZAP PASTA

All the beast within

Is unraveling

You punch out the clock

Energize within

--Landlady, Electric Abdomen

One is invariably caught, during these low-fidelity cinematic rituals, in a miasma of heightened sensory data—a truly unforgiving convergence of the high-minded and the desperately low-rent. To witness the saga of **Glandlard the Landlord** spluttering into existence against the water-stained brick of the Astoria Houses wall is to participate in a cultural event so stubbornly, so deliberately Super 8, it achieves the quality of pure, unadulterated, Low Rent Renaissance texture. The brick itself—a canvas offering a competing narrative of chipped enamel and the trajectory of the dust motes—served only to intensify the film's grainy,

unsettling focus on the truly banal horrors of rent collection.

The projectionist, a chap whose wardrobe suggested a long-term acquaintance with discarded tarpaulins, managed to wedge the sputtering reel into place. The scene: Glandlard (our saturnine wastrel) regarding a pile of eviction notices with the joy of a Belgian cartographer who has given up all hope of ever seeing the Congo again. Suddenly, the soundtrack—a mournful, intended cello piece—was brutally supplanted by the film's chaotic, freakazoid armpit hair soundtrack weave:

Soundtrack Intervention: Mixtape Side B, Track 2

The music itself was a jarring, expertly curated splice of Real-World Detritus, a sonic manifestation of the film's own fractured sensibility:

- Fugazi's "Waiting Room" (3 seconds of bass-line only, a brief flash of post-hardcore insistence).
- An abrupt, clattering transition into a 1978 field recording of the **Sun Ra Arkestra** attempting to board a crosstown bus

(featuring the line: "It's the whole kit and caboodle! Get your tuba out of the way!").

- A final, sporadic blast of pure, low-fidelity sound: three full seconds of unedited cassette hiss, followed by a woman's voice saying, "I thought I told you to mail the electric bill."

The audience reaction was itself a kind of gonzo performance art. A resident, who had been meticulously charting the geological formation of a piece of chewing gum on the sidewalk, shouted: "That's my super's voice! He never mailed the electric bill!" A lone passerby, wearing a polyester suit whose pleats seemed to defy the very geometry of the known world, simply stood and applauded the screen's sheer insistent absence of a coherent narrative.

The Zine and the Municipal Interruption

It was during this auditory assault that the meta-textual artifact appeared, a truly marvelous specimen of a cultural listing, passed around the assembly like a forbidden poultice of arcane knowledge:

ZINE ARCHIVE INTERVENTION:

L'Indifférent Mur (The Indifferent Wall)

- **Status:** Sporadic. Sometimes a single, spray-painted quattro-fold on an abandoned ice cream truck, other times a series of meticulously stapled descriptions of chipped enamel.
- **Focus:** A taxonomy of boredom. Highly recommended. The last issue simply detailed the various angles of repose attained by a discarded telephone directory over a three-day period.
- **Contact:** Throw a coin at a pigeon in Washington Square Park. If it catches the light just so, they know you're interested. Anarchists Unite! is a fave zine but comes out sporadically...

A flash of a xeroxed quattro-fold was briefly superimposed over Glandlard's rubbery visage: a Queens 107th Precinct citation for Disturbing the Peace—"Subject was projecting 'loud, alarming shadows' onto a public dwelling wall at 2:17 AM while simultaneously operating a loud, unlicensed mixer to play 'A pox upon the whole kit and caboodle of modern jazz' at volume 11."

The Landlord's Final Tenure (2023)

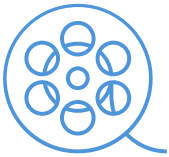
Then, the true rupture. Glandlard, mid-rant about the rising cost of boiler fluid, abruptly materializes out of the grainy Super 8 frame. He is no longer a shadow-puppet of housing injustice but a squat, utterly mortal man wearing a polyester suit whose pleats seemed to defy the geometry of the known world. He regards the indifferent wall one last time, hailed a passing cab to the Port Authority, and, by all accounts, purchased the cheapest possible ticket south, disappearing on a Greyhound bus bound for some sun-baked anonymity.

The final frames of the film show an empty, inexplicably wet corner of a boiler room. The insistent absence of Glandlard is absolute.

He was last seen in a Sarasota, Florida, trailer park, tending a small, aggressive patch of tomatoes. He had taken the name "Stan" and, in a fit of ironic despair, was obsessively listing all his worldly possessions—a taxonomy of boredom—in a series of hand-written ledgers.

He passed quietly in 2023, his only surviving relic a partially hand-stenciled zine he had been attempting to publish, entitled **The Damp Sock Review**. The final entry was a single, baroque

sentence detailing the trajectory of a single ant across a formica countertop, an utterly banal object rendered sublime by his dying, unyielding gaze. It was, at long last, the whole kit and caboodle of authentic, unhinged closure.



Dominic True and the Jumpsuit Hammock:

A Nocturne in Bald Head, Maine, or Rather, the Baldheaded Nocturnality Wherein the Jumpsuithammockery Suspends All Certainties in a Windwhispered Sarcophallus

By Jaslow Ludwig

In the teethwhispering wind off the Atlanticsnarl, where pines gnaw back at the gnawing, and shingles saltscabbed like forgotten wounds on the cannery's carcass—abandoned, yes, but echoing with the ghostcod's digestions from far past wharves where fishermen in oilskins bartered souls for herring quotas, decades past when the factory belched steam like a depressed leviathan reciting Baudelairean blues, and now, in this present foghornmoan of robotrilkean lament—there stood, or rather swayed, or perhaps unstood in a deliberate

unsuspension, Dominic True, that ascetic ecstasyexplorer, austere connoisseur, unburdened disciple, clutching a navyblue jumpsuit that was no mere garment but a relicfugitive, greasepalmed by mechanics in Brno's feverflea markets, where a oneeyed hedgehogjugglerpriest had defrocked it into barter, insisting in Czechmáj informel whispers that it held the starch of factoryshifts and the sweat of midnight absconders, though who could say, for memory here blurs like Proustian madeleines dipped in saltwater, evoking not just the taste but the gloomclong of bells from Sicilian cliffsides where neckties once fished for ephemera.

Why carry a bed when you can wear it? The idea fugued him between Thoreau's taxreceipt ruminations and a Japanese treatise on uprightslumber, but wait—no, that's the linear lie; in truth, it erupted in a nonsequitur burst, a malapropismic mishmash where the jumpsuit became hammock in waiting, its seams sturdy as sailor knots, gussets generous as Diogenes' barrelroll through Athenian agora, though here in Bald Head's maritime rotbrine, kelpghosts tangled with the present's diner coffee strong enough to dissolvetime, while decades past the cannery workers in starchstiff overalls dreamed of Buenos Aires newspapernests called

palacephemera, and far past, oh far past, when Algonquin shamans suspended birchbark cradles between windbent pines scarred by nor'easters that weren't yet named but howled in protoDada fury, turning bodies into questionmarks hung like koans in bluecotton manifestos.

He chose— or was chosen by?—those two pines, groovedscarred like Lacanian mirrors reflecting the lacks of universe strings, testing tension with drunktrapeze solemnity, stepping in with the grace of a failed aeronaut, for the jumpsuit hammock creaked acceptance, a textilesarcophagus where zipper guillotined dullspine, but comfort? Bourgeois illusiontrap, mattressmortgage snare, transcended by Dominic in sway, windrocked in indifferent arms, dreaming Slovakhermits, Diogenesbarrel, that Buenos man in ephemerapalace, while around him the headbald exhaled rot, brinekelp codghost, foghorn moaning depressedrobot Rilke, eyes closed in a multilingual mashup: "Der Kapitän gab eine sprechen an die crew," but no, that's the Goonish disruption, for suddenly the narrative shatters—wait, reader, did you catch the script calling for alive victims? He'd been suspended for days, a shame really, as the next scene demands untying.

And yet, in this tableau first: The Ascent, where dialogue arcs crystalline, Wittgensteinwrightian, building unassailable system. Dominic to the pines: "O windbent steelbirds of the tarmacpine, porcelainvessels of bitterwakefulness, lend your groovedscars to my jumpsuithammockery." The trees, archetypal sentinels from Fryean myths, reply in aphoristic core: "A fool builds his house on sand, but the wise man wears his bed between branches," borrowing from Chinese proverbs and Panchatantra foxes, cunning in their pragmatism, for here the foxembodied shrewdness whispers, "Suspend not just cloth, but illusions," while the liondominant roars ironic fable: "The hedgehogjugglerpriest knew one trick, but the jumpsuit knows all—parachute, tent, fishingline, failed all yet manifesto eternal."

But ascent peaks to zenith, Poejungian obsessive, claustrophobic hubris exposed in perverse tenderness for fall. Visuals shift: Matisse collage vibrancy tears into Redonpastel ethereals, dark figures haunting edges, Bolex camera grabbing deepfocus disorientations, soundtrack layering Bachcello with popguitar riff, folk mourn undercurrent. Dominic's inner monologue midrashic: Remez allusion to Brno's oneeye, "That jugglerhedgehog was no priest but a Lacanlack, mirroring my own unburdened void," commentary on commentary twisting earlier

knot: "The sailor's tie? No, a fisher's lie, for in Sicilian cliffs the necktie caught not fish but windwhispers of Goreckian emptiness." Derash exposition blooms: A sway in wind becomes monologue on suffering's nature, "This textilesarcophagus guillotines not spine but bourgeois comfort, revealing the rawedge of existence, Laytonly intense, crushingdespair grandiose."

Dawn interrupts with lobsterfisherman, beardscratching archetype subverted: "You're either genius or townnuisance," but Dominic, pinkeningsky blinking, replies "Yes," untying self, stepping back into jumpsuit as mereclothing, walking villageward where diner dissolves time in coffeestrong, but wait—the experiment success? Slept without bed, merged with wind, bodyquestionmark hung, rest commentary, yet in fragmentation: Weeks later, jumpsuit parachutefashioned, failed, but repurposing relentless, lifevessels transientmeaning, no longer clothinghammock aeronautfail but koanstitch bluecotton.

Epilogue? Or interlacefable? Snow falls first, burying cannerypines in silencesilence, Dominic elsewhere—Pragueattic woolcoattent, Siciliancliff necktiefishline, world things unmade, willing apostate, but now collapse glorious,

Stravinskyduncan: Hatfieldnorth improvisation frantic, dialogue jarring dissonant, "The jumpsuithammockery crashes earthward, whispereddocumentation disappearingact," Shakespearean scaffolding broken, versefragments raw emotionality, unhinged languageballet toward curtainfinal.

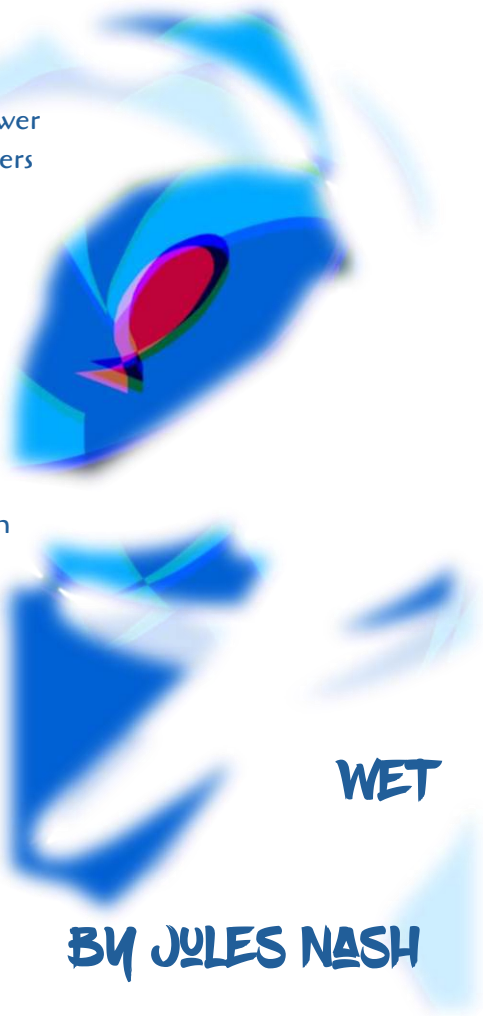
The silence? Not end but revelation—beautiful unrepeatable dreamwreck, scattered fragments where meaning gleams in chaos, a synesthetic revue fallen, yet in that fall, the hybridization resolves: Contradictions married, ideologies coexistent, absurdhumor ironicparadox, memory fluid, archetypes subverted, fables interlaced, all in one riotous singularity, gonzo hyperbolic, surreal magicreal, NouveauRoman essaytableaux, Czechmáj informel echoing through windteeth whispers eternal.

Arbitrary Axis
You're the new Mayflower
Sailing across rough waters
In a hiked-up hoop skirt
Parasol for a sail

The Amphicar Aubade
You've got it made
In the shade

Dancing at dance offs
On a scow in Skowhegan
The arbitrary Armada
As cancan cantata

The life long love
Of my life

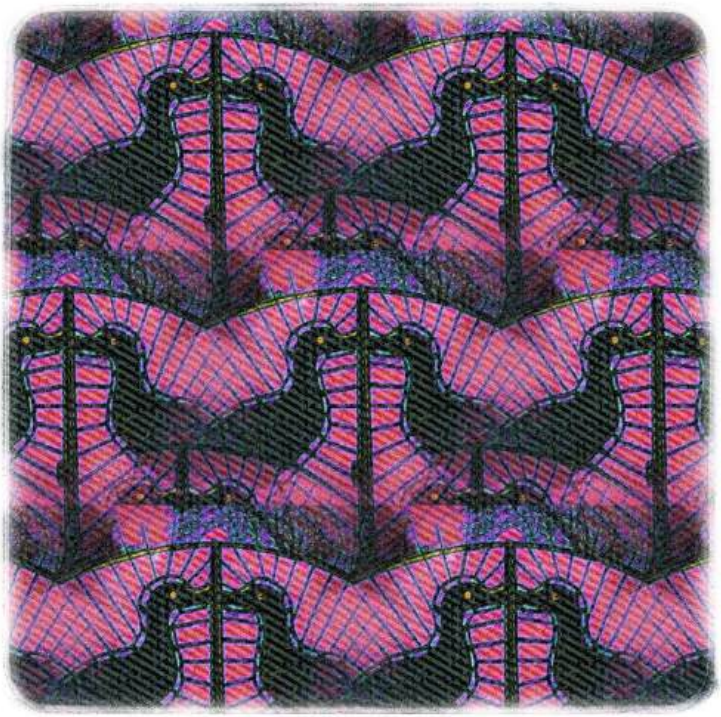


WET

BY JULES NASH

Lace socks with Mary Janes
Seeking a pebble
Wait
It's a Crumb
Feed it to that pigeon
Now I've got a groupie
For life

Friends
By Lucille Montague



Neon Zeitgeist Pulse:

A Berlin Cut through Sound, Color, and Memory

By Thorsten Bauer

In the endless convolution of the night, where Berlin's streets unfold like a labyrinth of concrete and shadows, Lena entered Sisyphos at 2:47 a.m., that pulsating vault on Rinckefleischstraße in Reinickendorf, where the scars of the Wall still drew like invisible threads through the air, a place that mocked the myth of the eternally rolling stone, yet simultaneously captured the tormenting repetition of waiting before doors that opened only for the chosen.

Sisyphos is no mere club nor warehouse of decadence. It is a five-chambered sanctum dug

beneath the skin of the city – each room a reliquary of tempo, hue, and memory. The Main Floor throbs with bass-heavy sermons spun by acolytes like John Osborn and Manamana, where visual runes writhe across CRT screens taped to repurposed bookshelves. There, gin basil smashes burn slow and Club-Mate flows like sacramental wine. Tongues spoken? German laced with sarcasm, English tinged with longing, and always, somewhere, the Slavic drone of exile.

Overheard in the jasmine-scented queue: "I follow the bass like the river of an old memory..."

And lo, the Lykke Li remix of "I Follow Rivers" pounded against her chest like a mechanical heart that refused to stand still, an unrelenting cycle of sonic disruptions that made the city vibrate at its core, while Lena tried to outdance the looming darkness of her visa, that financial catastrophe looming like a shadow over her days – simply vibrate, Lena, vibrate until the past dissolves into the mists.

She wore a Russian military coat sourced from a thrift shop, lined with faux fur, which might once have belonged to a woman named Yelena, as the sewn-in label revealed, and although Lena had never met Yelena, she liked the idea that a foreign

spirit dwelt in the seams, an echo from distant steppes now nesting in Berlin's chill.

Then the man in the tweed jacket approached, holding a copy of The Encyclopedia of American Cultural Memory, Vol. III: Nostalgia and the Sonic Self, authored by Dr. Augustin Veldt, and he himself was Dr. Augustin Veldt, professor of something called Cultural Chronotopology at the Humboldt University of Berlin, a department that no one knew because it perhaps existed only in the folds of time.

In his inner pocket nestled a chick – soft-plumed and absurd – which chirped softly whenever he moved, a tiny creature that underscored the absurdity of the night and reminded all present that chaos wears many disguises, often feathered.

"Excuse me," he bellowed over the music, words that already echoed in a shattered timeline, "but what do you think of the emotional resonance of the tertiary colors?"

Lena grinned; she had seen everything in London, but Berlin was the pinnacle of the bizarre. "You're feral, mate," she called back, amused, "right in the middle of this banger track?" And she knew the music was pure destruction, and destruction

always attracted the absurd; he was the proof, a walking fragment from forgotten libraries.

The crowd surged, tearing them apart, and the man remained standing, his face pale, yet his eyes wide open, wired, the vintage pocket watch clutched tightly, as if it held a secret captive, and it did, the hands frozen at 3:17, a moment that split the city into two parts – before and after, like God's breath dividing light from dark.
3:17 a.m. is no arbitrary measure. It is the hour when the Wall gave way, when the tectonic plates of ideology cracked, and when memory leapt forward with bleeding feet. Thus, the timepiece gripped by Veldt was no trinket, but a reliquary – its frozen hands a wound in time's side.

Later, in Mitte, in a fourth-floor walk-up without an elevator above a boarded-up textile shop from DDR times on Kupfergraben, Lena and her sister Chloe sat in the rear of a dismantled Trabant 601, now resurrected as part of Dr. Veldt's Trabant Lounge – a conceptual installation and simultaneously his living room. The car was parked sideways, its front wheels directed at a flickering cathode-ray television perched on a stack of Oswald Spengler's The Decline of the West, and the apartment was a space of repurposed furniture and interrupted thoughts, a

literal collage of the city's past, where fragments of East and West collided in a dialectical dance.
Chloe, pragmatic and unimpressed, shook her head. "I only moved to Berlin because rents in London had gone mad," she explained over the tinny Spanish ranchera music spilling from the VHS player, "Lena always chases the next big vibration; me? I just want a clean bathroom and stable Wi-Fi, the fundamentals of existence."

The Professor, now perched on a metal folding chair, nodded deliberately, his gaze fixed on a framed, faded map of divided Berlin on the wall, in his hand the pocket watch – its glass cracked, the hands frozen at 3:17.

He reached into his jacket pocket; the chick pecked hesitantly at the cracked linoleum, small, warm, and utterly ridiculous, life untamed.
And then it lit a cigarette.

A Roth-Händle (no filter) – a German brand so dark and strong that it bore the reputation of a relic, one smoked today as a statement: I reject modernity, embrace the past in its raw, unstrained splendor, a cigarette that made one cough on the first drag and still on the tenth, yet the chick did not cough; it inhaled long and slowly, as if it had done so for decades.

Lena grimaced; Chloe rolled her eyes; the Professor looked away, as if it were not happening.

Yet it was.

The chick exhaled a plume of smoke that hung in the air like a judgment, a fog that dissolved the boundaries between the real and the dreamlike – and within that plume, the voice emerged, deep and resonant, carrying a posh German accent reminiscent of the refined Hochdeutsch spoken by the old Prussian aristocracy or the educated elite of pre-war Berlin salons, with crisp, precisely articulated consonants that clicked like polished silverware on fine china, elongated vowels drawn out with an air of leisurely authority, and a subtle, melodic intonation that rose and fell with the cadence of classical oratory, evoking the formal eloquence of university lectures or diplomatic discourses, yet delivered from this diminutive beak with an unshakeable gravitas that made the absurd seem profound; the accent wove through the smoke like threads of forgotten nobility, curling and dissipating just as the plume did, each word enunciated with a patrician clarity that seemed to summon the ghosts of lost empires, and in that swirling haze, something essential vanished – the cracked glass face of the pocket watch, which had been resting

on the Trabant's dashboard, shimmered briefly before dissolving entirely into the fog, leaving only the chain dangling empty, a relic now bereft of its core, symbolizing the irretrievable slip of time itself.

Chloe gasped, her eyes widening in startled disbelief, her hand flying to her mouth as the disappearance registered, a resonant pang that echoed the city's own lost histories, the vanished moments that could never be reclaimed, a fleeting glimpse of time's fragility that struck like a sudden wound.

Relics do not rot; they drift. First they vanish from pockets, then from minds, then from maps. Only chains remain.

On the steps of the Old Museum, overlooking the Spree, Lena chewed on a strawberry candy, the crinkling plastic unexpectedly loud in the night air, piercing the city's quiet hum.

"Right, russet and chartreuse," she said, leaning back against the cold stone, "that's clever, asking about the tertiaries; chartreuse is the disruptor, it gives chaos, and that chaos is a necessary ascent."

Her eyes wandered to the pocket watch, still in the Professor's fist.

"This watch," she said softly, "it is the key, stopped at 3:17 – when the Wall fell, a marker for all that is lost and found in this city."

He nodded gravely, "the colors – russet, chartreuse – are metaphors for chaos and grounding, but this watch is the true McGuffin, the thing that drives us, a relic of Berlin's fractured time, a reminder that history is always frozen, always slipping away."
He fell silent, processing, the candy a dull lump in his mouth.

"I must now show you the Ship of Monsters," he proclaimed, his voice trembling slightly, "all filmed in glorious, chaotic Mexican Technicolor! It is about chaos, about reinvention, about Berlin, in a way."

Lena grinned, "Hold on, Professor, now you're the feral one; isn't the film in black and white? Pure vintage vibration?"

The Trabant door flies open in the film, and the one-eyed Cyclops climbs out, wearing the Professor's horn-rimmed glasses, immediately followed by black-and-white footage of border

guards at the Wall, their faces inscrutable, a whirl of fragments where the past and the imagined collide.

His face drained of color, "a gross error of recollection! I have conflated the conceptual vibrancy with the actual film stock! It is an act of unconscious coloration!" he cried, clutching the pocket watch as if to restore its ticking, a dialectical struggle against oblivion.

Thus do we err when we mistake symbols for substance. The mind colors the reel; nostalgia edits the script.

Later in the Trabant Lounge, the Professor reached for a record, "before we plunge into the Ship of Monsters, I must play something for you," he murmured, sliding a disc onto the turntable — an album by Landlady.

"Electric Abdomen," he said reverently, "a modern cut, a song cycle for the post-postmodern era."

The chick tilted its head, and in that deep, posh-accented voice — precise consonants snapping like autumn leaves underfoot in a manicured Tiergarten path, vowels stretched with the

aristocratic poise of a bygone era's intelligentsia – intoned, "You mean it is like Song Cycle?"

The Professor nodded, "yes, both are collages; Parks's orchestration baroque, fractured, deeply American; Landlady ties into it with Brooklyn irritation, Berlin chaos, and a heartbeat of emotional sincerity, a labyrinth of layers where the unconscious breaks through."

Lena leaned back, eyes closed, "it is as if the past wished to sing to us but could not recall the melody, so it layers horns, harmonies, and half-finished stories, an expressionistic cry in the silence."

Chloe raised an eyebrow, "I don't know; sounds like an album one listens to when wanting to feel something but having forgotten what, a skeptical stance toward the exuberant."

The Professor ignored her, "it is the emotional resonance that counts; Parks's Song Cycle a map of the American subconscious – half memory, half dream; Landlady does the same for the digital soul, the same lushness, the same fractured beauty, a dialectical process of synthesis."

Lena nodded, "yes, as if they were building a cathedral from shattered mirrors, where each shard reflects a different past."

The chick pecked at the floor, its voice resonant with that aristocratic clarity, "and every mirror shows a different version of the past, an infinite regress of meanings."

Would that we could see ourselves truly, reflected whole. But fate arranges kaleidoscope over mirror. Perspective over purity.
They ordered döner from a 24-hour stand near Hackescher Markt, the kind wrapped in foil, still warm when torn into; Lena with extra garlic sauce, Chloe with pickles and a portion of skepticism, the Professor with silence, and a cigarette for the chick.

They ate in the Trabant, engine long removed, seats still bolted in place; the chick lit a Roth-Händle with a match in its beak, exhaled smoke as if to fog the history, its posh accent threading through the plume like a ghostly orator from a lost Berlin salon.

"You know," it said, its deep voice carrying the weight of forgotten libraries, "such songs are no longer played in clubs; no one cares about the vintage vibrations – they want chaos, color, and a

beat that strikes like a fist; the remix? Merely a ghost of what was; if you chase ghosts, you miss the real chaos outside, the dialectical reversal." Chloe snorted, "and why are you here, chick? You're not clubbing; you're just pecking at the past."

The chick blinked, its voice unwavering, "because someone must preserve the real, and the real concerns the holes in the narrative – the missing colors, the unplayed tracks, the forgotten walls; if we do not question the vintage, we never find the new pattern, the overcoming of the old."

Lena shook her head, smiled faintly, "you're right, little philosopher, but I think no reputable club plays that stuff anymore; they play louder, faster, more chaotic – like this new techno remix by... whatever; why so obsessed with the music? Isn't Berlin about the now?"

The chick ruffled its tiny feathers, its aristocratic cadence sharp and deliberate, "because the now is built upon the ghosts of the past, and if you do not acknowledge the ghosts, they will haunt the future; that is why I remain – pecking at the holes, filling the missing colors, ensuring we do not forget the chaos that created us, an eternal recurrence."

Chloe rolled her eyes but nodded slightly, "whatever; don't expect me to get philosophical about it; I just want a clean bathroom and good Wi-Fi, and perhaps a playlist that makes sense, a rational foundation."

The Professor, eyes distant, finally looked at Lena, "the colors, the stories, the chaos – everything is a cut, a collage of fragments, yet from these fragments emerges a new pattern, and that pattern... there lies the truth, in the synthesis of opposites."

Lena glanced at the empty pocket watch chain one last time, "well, if we are speaking of patterns, I hope it doesn't bother you if I keep this for a while; it has more stories than all of us combined."

He smiled, a spark of warmth in his eyes, "go ahead; it is merely a relic, like us all – stopped in a moment, awaiting reset or remembrance, an existential cycle."

The film image stabilizes; the Venusian Gamma smiles, and for half a second, the black-and-white fills with glorious, chaotic, definitive Technicolor; the sound is the pure, driving beat of the Lykke Li remix, then the stark, hopeful silence of a rebuilt city, a utopian vision.

Lena stood, stretching in the confined space, feeling the tension of the night, of the city, escape; she glanced at the empty chain one last time.

"Alright, Professor, you are the greatest main character I have ever met, but if I am sitting through a black-and-white monster film at 5 a.m., you had better have strong opinions on the emotional weight of the robot."

"Oh, I do," he promised, picking up The Encyclopedia of American Cultural Memory, Vol. III, "the robot is the tragic hero, the pure primary forced into a tertiary world, the perfect Berlin metaphor, a struggle of identities."

The chick stubbed out its Roth-Händle with surgical precision, its posh voice cutting through the lingering smoke, "And the cigarette is the relic that does not die, a symbol of persistence."

LICHTER AUS, ZEIT ZU GEHEN!

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